

House Passes Funding for Livability Programs

On July 29th, the House of Representatives passed [H.R. 5850 - Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2011](#)

. This bill, written by LCTF member and Appropriations Subcommittee Chairman John Olver, funds the Departments of Transportation (DOT) and Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Earlier this year, LCTF members wrote to the Appropriations Subcommittee urging them to include high funding levels for livability programs within the two agencies. The bill passed by House last month funded livability programs at \$527 million, including \$150 million for HUD's Sustainable Communities Initiative, \$20 million for DOT's Office of Livable communities, \$200 million for livable communities projects and planning assistance within the Federal Highway Administration – subject to the passage of authorizing legislation, and \$306.91 million for livable communities projects within the Federal Transit Administration. Similar legislation is awaiting passage in the Senate.

Senate Banking Committee Passes Livable Communities Act

On August 3rd, the Senate Banking Committee passed S. 1619, the Livable Communities Act. Similar legislation was introduced in the House, H.R. 4690, by LCTF member Rep. Ed Perlmutter and has been endorsed by the LCTF. The legislation establishes a grant program administered by HUD to assist local governments in planning for and creating better, more affordable places to live and work. It also authorizes an Office of Sustainable Housing and Communities at HUD. During the mark-up, Banking Committee Chairman Sen. Chris Dodd, author of the legislation, described his interest in the issue saying that “a failure to plan is a plan to fail.”

LCTF Members Introduce Livability Legislation

On July 22nd, LCTF Chairman Rep. Earl Blumenauer (D-OR) introduced legislation to provide homebuyers and policymakers with information about the transportation costs associated with the location of a home. The average family spends about half of its income on transportation and housing costs. Housing affordability has traditionally been measured as the extent to which a household's income can cover the purchase price of a home or the monthly rent. However, transportation costs vary based on the location of a home.

[H.R. 5824](#), the Transportation and Housing Affordability Transparency Act, or "THAT Act," requires the HUD to work with the DOT and other stakeholders to develop a transportation affordability index that measures the transportation costs associated with the location of a home. HUD will be required, where feasible, to incorporate this information into its housing programs and share this information with the general public, realtors, regional and local housing and planning agencies, states, and entities that engage in transportation demand management programs. The legislation builds on work done by the Center for Neighborhood Technology and their

[Housing and Transportation Affordability Index](#)

, which has already been adopted for use by the

[City of El Paso](#)

and the State of Illinois. The Blumenauer legislation is supported by a number of organizations, including the National Association of Realtors, Smart Growth America, the Low Income Housing Coalition, The American Planning Association, the Center for Neighborhood Technology, the American Institute of Architects, the Association for Commuter Transport, U.S. Green Building Council, the National Housing Trust, and Reconnecting America.

On July 29, 2010, Rep. Albio Sires (D-NJ) introduced [H.R. 5976](#), the "Focusing Resources, Economic Investment, and Guidance to Help Transportation (FREIGHT) Act of 2010" which will implement a strategic plan to guide the goods movement, create an office devoted to freight planning within the Department of Transportation (DOT), and establish a competitive grant program for freight transportation projects. LCTF member Rep. Steve Cohen (D-TN) is an original co-sponsor of this legislation along with Reps. Laura Richardson (D-CA) and Adam Smith (D-WA). The Office of Freight Planning and Development within the DOT will be instrumental in implementing the National Freight Strategic Transportation Plan, to assess the current freight transportation system and ability to achieve future objectives. This legislation will promote the concept of livable communities by establishing goals that promote energy conservation and environmental sustainability and by advancing public safety and health in communities adjacent to freight infrastructure. The FREIGHT Act was introduced as the House companion to S. 3629 introduced by U.S. Senators Frank R. Lautenberg (D-NJ), Patty Murray (D-WA), and Maria Cantwell (D-WA) on July 22, 2010.

New Bikesharing Program in the Nation's Capitol

The Washington, DC Department of Transportation and Arlington County recently announced a new regional bike sharing program called “ [Capitol Bikeshare](#) .” Launched this month, the program will eventually have 1100 bikes and 114 stations and will be the largest of its kind in the United States. The DC program, operated by Alta Bicycle Share, a subsidiary of Portland-based Alta Planning and Design, is similar to one that has been in place in Montreal since 2009 and will also be replicated in Minneapolis, Melbourne, and London. The stations are solar powered and use wireless technology.

We appreciate your interest in LCTF’s work, and we will keep you informed of happenings both on and off Capitol Hill. For more information, feel free to visit [the LCTF website](#) .

Sincerely,

Congressman Earl Blumenauer and Members of the Livable Community Task Force